

Proficiency Testing on a Budget Getting It Right the First Time

Manage PT effectively without overspending

Article 17 of 22

5-minute read

2 Failures

Consecutive for same analyte
can mean sanctions

Annual

Budget PT as a
fixed quality cost

Exactly

What CLIA requires—
no more, no less

Proficiency testing is a CLIA requirement and a critical quality check, but it can also be a budget line item that spirals. Between enrollment fees, shipping, and reagent consumed, expenses add up.

1 Enroll Strategically

Review your test menu against the CMS list of regulated analytes. Enroll in exactly what is required—no more, no less. Some labs over-enroll by subscribing to tests they do not perform. Check annually.

2 Treat PT Samples Like Patient Samples

Do not run PT in a special batch or with extra care. Do not repeat analysis. Do not discuss results before reporting. Run through normal workflow with same operators, instruments, and procedures.

QUICK TIP: The most common PT failure cause is NOT treating PT like patient samples.

3 Review Results Promptly

The director must review PT results promptly. For unacceptable results, investigate root cause and document corrective action before the next PT event. Two consecutive failures can mean sanctions.

4 Use Alternative Assessment Where Appropriate

For analytes without affordable PT programs, use split-sample testing with a reference lab, cross-instrument comparison, or previously verified samples. Document carefully.

5 Budget for PT Annually

List every enrollment, cost, shipping, and estimated reagent cost at the start of each year. Include as a fixed quality cost. This prevents surprises and helps evaluate low-volume test viability.

QUICK TIP: Factor PT costs into your keep-vs-send-out analysis for low-volume tests.

PT COST COMPONENTS (TYPICAL ANNUAL)



Typical proficiency testing cost breakdown

BOTTOM LINE: One PT failure costs far more in corrective action time and regulatory risk than the PT enrollment itself. Invest the effort to get it right every time.

FREE TOOLS TO GET STARTED

| Template | What It Does |
|--|--|
| PT Annual Budget Planner | Track enrollment fees, shipping, and reagent costs per analyte |

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